THEISM IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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We in India have ever been enjoying freedom in thinking. Even in the ancient times, when religion was a great force among all the nations of the world and when our ancestors also were extremley religious-minded, there existed sufficient variety in the way of thinking of our people. There were believers in God, and there were athiests also. Theistic conceptions about God also were of different types and people were always free to argue and to propagate and were ever prepared to listen and to discuss. They were ever willing to be convinced and were never afraid of any type of antagonists. Consequently, all the views and faiths were tolerated in this country. This freedom of thought gave rise to different theories about God.

There were atheists who are known as *carvakas* and who denied the very existence of God and did not believe in religion. Then there were early Buddhists and Jains who believed in religion, praised good actions, hated and condemned sinful activities, had firm faith in the theory of transmigration of soul and accepted the law of *Karman*. But they did not accept the existence of any God enforcing the law of action and its reward. No one of these sects did ever believe in the authority of the *Vedas*. Then we come to the *Vedic* philosophy of *Purva-mimamsa*. The adherents of this philosophy practised *Vedic* religion, worshiped *Vedic* gods and offered oblations to them in the sacred fire, but even they did not believe in the existence of any supreme God either as the sole presiding deity over the creation, the preservation and the dissolution of the universe, or as The Master enforcing the law of *Karman*. It is only the later

Mimansakas who, under the influence of other schools of Indian philosophy, accept the existence of God as the over-lord of all the *Vedic* gods.

It seems that the earlier *Sankhya* philosophy of Kapila, which has left some traces in the *Upanisads*, was sufficiently theistic[1] in nature, but the later development of this school proceeded more or less on partially atheistic lines. The *Sankhyas*, like the Buddhists and the Jains, can be classed as semi-atheists, because, all these three sects believe in the law of action and its reward but do not accept any authority that makes and enforces that law. The *Yoga* philosophy also does not go much beyond in theism. It accepts the existence of an *Iswara*[2] (God) as an ever pure and ever liberated soul who is the preceptor of all the ancient preceptors. This philosophy does not confer on Him any authority to create, to preserve or to dissolve the universe; and, thus, it does not accept any kind of Godhead in him.

The *Vedantic* school of Gaudapada and Sankara admits that the *Iswara* (God) is all powerful, omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, that He at His will creates and dissolves this universe[3] consisting of numerous subjects and objects and that He is the Lord of the whole existence making and enforcing its laws of action and its reward. But, at the same time, the *Vedanta* philosophy teaches that this universe does never exist in reality; it only appears just like a dream or jugglery.[4] The absolute *Brahman* above is a reality. It is that *Brahman* which appears as *Iswara* (God), as *Jiva* (soul), and as the phenomenal universe because of some beginningless ignorance come down to us from our previous lives. Neither God, nor soul, nor the universe does exist as something real. They only appear because of *Avidya* (ignorance) which is never explicable. So God and His Godhead enjoy only a visionary existence like that of a mirage and do never exist in reality according to the metaphysics of the *Vedanta* philosophy. Everything other than

the *Brahman* is nothing more than a son of a eunuch[5] and the *Brahman* alone is some thing real. It does not possess anything like a quality or a particular at all, but is self-evident as the only existing thing. Thus the *Vedanta* philosophy also is not strictly a theistic one. It comes nearer to the Nihilistic views of Nagarjuna, the great Buddhist philosopher.

The really theistic schools of Indian philosophy are those of (a) *Nyaya-Vaisesikas*, (b) *Vaisnavas*, and (c) *Saivas*. The *Nyaya-Vaisesika* philosophies teach that God is a Super Being possessed of the knowledge of everything and the powers to do everything. He is different from souls, who are numerous and also form the elements like atoms, time, space, etc. Souls are involved in cycles of transmigration because of their past actions ultimately caused by their false knowledge—which has no beginning. God feels pity for suffering souls and creates this universe out of atoms for them. Souls can get the rewards of their actions in this creation and can achieve real knowledge also. That saves them from further transmigration. God, according to these two schools, is the Lord of the universe but is dependent, firstly, on atoms which He has to collect and use in creation and, secondly, on the past actions of souls in the light of which he has to create worlds, bodies, senses and organs for souls. He has to be ever busy in creating, preserving and dissoloving this existence and thus is not sufficiently free and independent.

The *Vaisnavas* have gone a step further in theism in maintaining that God is absolutely self-dependent; worlds and souls are mere manifestation of his energy and He, by his innate nature, creates, preserves and dissolves this phenomenal existence without depending on anything other than himself. The *Vaisnavas* are divided into four sects. Some of them say that there is a partial unity and partial diversity between God, on the one hand, and souls and worlds, on the other.

~~hand~~. Others believe in complete diversity and the third sect believes that unity and diversity are manifested one after another in the cycles of dissolution and creation and that therefore both are correct. The fourth sect, namely, the *Sudhadvaita* sect of *Vallabha* believe in the absolute unity of everything. The *Sudhadvaitins* do not believe in the existance of *Maya* or *Avidya* as the cause of the appearance of the phenomenal existence. They say that the Lord, through his own innate energy, makes these phenomena appear in His own self. He is not dependent on anything other than His energy. It is His nature that He appears in the form of a limited soul, transmigrates, is involved in ignorance, achieves real knowledge and attains, as it were, His own Godhead through it[6]. There the principles of the *Vaisnavas* are highly theistic, but they take God in the form of Lord *Narayana* or Lord *Krisna*[7] and take His energy in the form of *Laksmi* or *Radhika*. They do not preach the existence of God without a form. They believe in the existence of some particular abode of God which is made of pure substances. It is named as *Vaikuntha* and comes to be a sort of a superior heaven. This view of the ***Vaisnavas*** brings their teachings closer to mythology than to philosophy. So, in spite of being strictly theistic, the outlook of the *Vaisnavas* is more mythological than philosophic, while the *Vedantic* outlook is strictly philosophic though less theistic. The *Vadanta*, therefore, is more popular with scholars and thinkers than the *Vaisnava* theories.

The *Saivistic* theory is, on the one hand, absolutely philosophic and, on the other, ~~hand~~, strictly theistic. The *Saivas* believe that the real self alone is metaphysically true. There is no limitation of any kind in that self. Time and space do not limit it. The self alone has real existence and every thing else has only an imaginary existence. The self is ever self-evident and self-conscious. Its consciousness is a sort of a stir in its existence. Everything exists in the self in the form

of self, just as all the parts of a tree exist in a seed in the form of seed. A seed is seed and seed alone. There is no trace of either the appearance or the name of a tree in a seed and yet the name and the appearance of a tree do exist in a seed. In the same way the self is self alone and there is not any trace of the phenomenal universe in it. It is an unlimited 'I' and 'I' alone; yet the whole objective phenomena exist absorbed in that 'I'[8] in such a way that its objectivity does not appear at all. It is on account of the subtle stir of the consciousness of the self that the objective existence starts appearing in its objective nature. This is the activity of creation of the self. Then this existence keeps on appearing for pretty long ages. This is his activity of preservation. After a long time this objective creation gets again obsorbed into the self and this is the activity of absorption of the self. The self appearing as a limited soul conceals his real nature which is free from all limitation, and this is his activity of obscuration. At times a soul recognizes his forgotten nature of limitlessness and this is his activity of revelation. The self is always keeping himself busy in these five activities with respect to different worlds and souls. This he does by virtue of his nature and, doing so, he always exists in this universal aspect. But, while doing so, he does not deviate even a bit from his transcendental aspect which is one complete whole 'I' and that alone. The self is the *Parama Siva* or the Absolute God[9]. His transcendental aspect is His *Sivahood* and His universal aspect is His *Saktihood*. The five activities of creation, preservation, absorption, obscuration and revelation are known as this fivefold Godhead. He manages the sport of His Godhead by means of His innate stir of consciousness which is not in any respect different from Him. So He is absolutely self-dependent. The whole universe is only an aspect of His absolute Godhead. Everything is in Him and He is in everything. Everything is He and He is everything.[10] He is in everything and He is beyond everything. This

is His nature and this is His Godhead. Had he not been possessed of this nature of indulging in the five activities of Godhead, He alone would have existed or He also may have or may not have existed at all, for who would have questioned or established His existence[11]. But He exists, and exists as Absolute God and consequently is ever indulging luxuriously in the five activities of His Godhead by His own nature. The inexplicable ignorance, atoms, *Karmas*, etc., appear in this drama of Godhead at different stages, but the root cause of all these sources of the universe is the Supreme Godhead of the *Parama Siva* according to the *Saiva* Philosophy In this way *Saivism* is the only school of Indian philosophy which accepts and explains theism in its highest form and yet is strictly monistic in view and philosophic in character. *Saivism* is as theistic as *Vaisnavism*, as philosophic as Nihilistic Buddhism, as monistic as the *Vedanta*, as realistic as the *Sankhya*, as practical as the *Mimansa* and as logical as the *Nyaya-Vaisesika*. But it is a pity that such a well developed school of Indian philosophy is very little known even in India, much less in any other country of the world.

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[1] See *Swetaswatara*—I-8; I-9; IV-5; V-2; VI-13; VI-16.

[2] क्लेश कर्म विपाकाशयैर परामृष्टः पुरुषविशेष ईश्वरः। (*Yoga Sutra* 1-25)
स पूर्वेषामपि गुरुः कालेनानवच्छेदात् । (,, ,, 1-26)

[3] *a*) कल्पयत्यात्मनात्मानमात्मा देवः स्वमायया।
स एव बुद्धयते भेदानिति वेदान्तनिश्चयः ॥ (*Gaudpadu Ka·ika*) II-12)

b) लोकवत्तु लीला कैवल्यम् । (*Brahma Suttram* II-1-33)

c) See also *Sankara Bhasyam* on *Brahma Sutram*— I-1- 5; I-3-30; I-4-3; II-1-37.

[4] *a*) धर्माय इति जायन्ते जायन्ते ते न तत्त्वतः।
जन्म मायोपमं तेषां सा च माया न विद्यते ॥ (*G. K.* IV 58)

b) तस्मान्न जायते चित्तं चित्तदृश्यं न जायते।
तस्य पश्यन्ति ये जातिं खे वै पश्यन्ति ते पदम् ॥ (*G. K.* IV-28)

c) न कश्चिज्जायते जीवः सम्भवोऽस्य न विद्यते।
तत्रैतत् परमं सत्यं यत्र किञ्चिन्न जायते ॥ (*G. K.* III-48)
d) See *Sankara Bhasyam* on *Brahma Sutra* II-1-14;

5 *a*) प्रपञ्चो यदि विद्येत् निवर्वेत न संशयः।
माया मात्रमिदं द्वैतमद्वैतं परमार्थतः॥ (*G. K.* I-18)
b) सद्भावेन ह्यजं सर्वमुच्छेदस्तेन नास्तिवै। (अजं ब्रह्मैवेति) (*J. K.* IV-57)
c) See also *Brahma Sutram Sanskara Bhasyam* II-1-14.

6 *a*) उत्पत्तिस्थितिसंहारा नियतिर्ज्ञानमावृतिः।
बन्धमोक्षौ च पुरुषाद् यस्मात् स हरिरेकराट्॥ (*Sarvadarsan Sangraha*)
b) वासुदेवः परं ब्रह्म कल्याणगुणसम्भवः।
भुवनानामुपादानं कर्ता जीवनियामकः॥

7 परब्रह्मपरवासुदेवादिच्यो नारायणः। (*Yatindra-matidipika*)

8 *a*) चिदात्मैव हि देवोऽन्तःस्थितमिच्छावशाद् बहिः।
योगीव निरुपादानर्थजातं प्रकाशयेत् (*Iswara Pratyabhijna* I-5-7)
b) न चेदन्तःकृतानन्तविश्वरूपो महेश्वरः।
स्यादेकश्चिद्वपुर्ज्ञान - स्मृत्यपोहन - शक्तिमान। Ibid (1-3-7)

9 कर्तरि ज्ञातरि स्वात्मन्यादिसिद्धे महेश्वरे।
अजडात्मा निषेधं वा सिद्धिं वा विदधीतकः॥ („ „ I-1-2)

10 निराशंसात् पूर्णादहमिति पुराभासति यद्
द्विशाखामाशास्ते तदनु च विभंक्तु निजकलाम्।
स्वरूपादुन्मेष प्रसरणनिमेषस्थितिजुषस्
तदद्वैतं वन्दे परमशिवशक्त्यात्म निखिलम्॥ (*Iswara Pratyabhijna Vimarsini* I-1-1)

11 अस्थास्यदेकरूपेण वपुषा चेन्महेश्वरः।
महेश्वरत्वं संवित्त्वं तदत्यक्ष्यद् घटादिवत्॥ (*Tantraloka* III-101)

Book Reviews

A Silence of Desire : By Kamla Markandaya (Patnum, London, 1960).

This is the third novel by the gifted South Indian writer, Kamla Markandaya. Her earlier novels were *Nectar in a Sieve* and *Some Inner Fury*, both of which earned fair appreciation from many eminent students and critics of English fiction today.

The title of the book is derived from the following lines of H. W. Longfellow, quoted by the author :

> "Three Silences there are ; the first of speech,
> The second of desire, the third of though."

It is a story of the India of post-independence era. The central character, Dandekar, is a clerk in a Government office in a small town somewhere in South India. He is not well off, but he has apparently achieved considerable happiness in his domestic life with his devoted wife, Sarojini, and their three children. They live in a modest rented accommodation and manage their household with the help of a part-time maid-servant. Dandekar draws a very meagre salary, but his efficient wife makes it go far. Dandekar prefers to walk daily to and back from his office, and thus saves a few rupees every month which he might, otherwise, have spent on bus fares. With this ingenious saving he manages to purchase some small presents for his wife and children towards the close of every month ; they are happy, and Dandekar is envied by other clerks, married and unmarried, in his office, because he is apparently so well-looked after